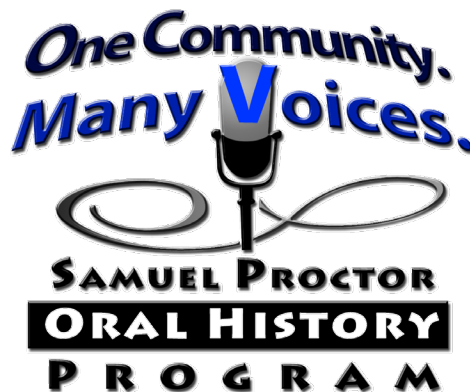


Mary Wood Long and Dr. William Long

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-141**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
October 24, 1977**



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CAT 141 Mary Wood Long and Dr. William Long
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Abstract: Mary Long tells the story of a theatrical production, *Kah-Woh, Catawba*, written by her husband, William Long, about events in Catawba history. Mary started her research for the play entirely with written accounts from libraries before going to the reservation to make connections with the Catawba people. After the play, Mary became a schoolteacher at Rock Hill High School.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Storytelling; Tribal history]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
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CAT 141

Interviewee: Mary Wood Long and Dr. William Long

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: October 24, 1977

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina. This is October 24. I'm working on the Catawba Indians' oral history. I'm visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Long on Ebenezer Avenue. Ms. Long, please tell me your name and your address.

ML: I'm Mary Long. This is 1858 Ebenezer Road.

E: Now, you've lived here in Rock Hill a long time. How long?

ML: Well, William was asked to come to Winthrop College twenty-four years ago to begin a drama department. I came along with him. We reared our children here. We have been living in this house about nineteen years. So I love Rock Hill, and I feel that this is home, and this is where our roots are now.

E: How did you become so interested in the Catawba Indians?

ML: Because I'm married to William. Mr. Harper Gault and several gentlemen in town thought that it would be very nice to have a production at Winthrop College concerning a love story of Sally Newriver. All they knew was that there had been a princess of the Catawbas, and it was suggested by the gentlemen that we have her fall in love with a handsome White man. But Bill and I have studied playwriting, and we appreciate scholarship. And so, William said, "No, let's get the real story of the Catawbas." While he was teaching school, I was not working at that time. I went to the local Rock Hill public library. Mrs. Nan Carson was very interested in this because of her friendship and work with Mrs. Douglas Somers-Brown, who had researched the Catawba Nation. And so, rather than meeting the Catawbas—because I'm a shy person, and I couldn't go out and introduce myself to strangers, and besides, that wasn't what William wanted me to do—I

sat in the library week after week and read all of the primary notes that Mrs. Brown had taken from her own research in other libraries as well as talking with the Catawbas. We felt that since the Smithsonian Institute and the Library of Congress said that the best collection of recorded information about the Catawba Indians was here in Rock Hill, we felt that their collection within the South Carolina Room, which they keep very carefully locked up, would be the best source material for any type of drama that we would like. So it took me seven months to read everything that was written. Now, this is not oral history. This is the recorded history, including John Lawson's description of the Catawbas when he was the first White man to come through this area, and he died so disastrously over in New Bern, North Carolina, 1711. Then I followed, as best I could, the writings of the very first missionaries and explorers and then the Red Carolinians and various texts which are standard. Out of this came a fascinating story of the American Revolution—not the complete story of the Catawbas because we were asked merely to do a play. The nineteenth century seemed to me to be very sad because here we had the coming of the White people, and the Indians tended to lose their identity, sadly enough, because their lands were taken away from them. In many ways, neither group knew how to cope with the other. So the story that to me was dramatic was the story of King Hagler and his strength of character in persisting with his belief that the Catawbas should support the English in the French and Indian War. Also, the fact that the Catawbas had also kept a trading path open from Charleston to Salisbury. Then too, they had a tremendous history prior to the coming of the

White man. Then we had Thomas Brad, and of course Sally Newriver, who married Charles Newriver. He and Thomas Brad had exchanged Indian and White man's names, of course. And so we ended our play in 1805 with the coming of George Washington on his tour through the South. He stopped at the Crawford homestead and presented Sally Newriver—not Charles, but Sally—as the princess of the [inaudible 4:27] which mistakenly showed the appreciation of the colony, and later the United States, for the cooperation of the Catawbas. So our research was purely an intellectual research, and our only contact with the Nation came as we were leaving for Manteo. Really, Bill and I had talked it over. Bill did the writing based upon this reading and research and outlining which I had done. We worked together like that. So before we went to Manteo, North Carolina, for the summer where Bill would finish the playwriting, I thought somebody somewhere in the Catawba Nation ought to know what these White people were up to. So I asked the lady who lived next door—her husband was Walter Smith, dean of the college at the time—asked her to go with me. And we took our little children and out we went to the reservation. I stopped at the very first house and a dog was there, and he didn't bark. The barkless dogs are in the records of the ancient Catawbas. So I thought, "Oh, that was a sign," and I went to the second house and not a soul was there. There was a plant that the Catawbas have always raised—I forget which one because this is eighteen years ago—but that struck me, "Well, here again is a connection." So we got in the car and went on down the road until we saw some people sitting in the yard, so I stopped the car. A lady, a gentleman, and a little boy. I introduced myself

and said that William and I were working on this play about the Catawba Indians, and I wanted to show this to somebody because I wouldn't like anyone writing a play about my people and not telling me. The man was not feeling well so he went back in the house, and the lady and her boy brought chairs, and we all had a wonderful time sitting out in the shade of a tree. I showed her the design for the Medicine Man's costume that Mr. Settlemyer had done and the picture that we hoped to use for the cover of the magazine, the symbol. Then I told her the basic story. She was very nice and heard me out. The little boy was just still. When I finished, she said, "I am Lillian Blue. And my father-in-law, Chief Blue, lived in our home during his last days, and he died here. He told me many things, but one thing that he told me was: 'Someday the White people will come, and they will ask questions about our Nation, and you must help them because we're all children in the eyes of God.'" And every time I think about it, to this day, Mrs. Echols, I get goose pimples. Because I had accidently found the right person because the Chief had told her someday, some White person would write it down. So that's how we found the research, and our only knowledge of the Indians has been through my teaching at Rock Hill High School and the fact that I had so many Catawba students. I love 'em to death.

E: You stopped at the home of Chief Blue. Lillian was living at the old Blue home at that time, I understand. Shade trees out in the yard—

ML: Begonias and other flowers in pots all around.

E: Chief Blue's home was burned, and the people of the community rebuilt his home.

ML: Did they really?

E: That's the home in which he died, and Lillian, his daughter-in-law, was there when he died.

ML: But it was absolutely an accident that I ended at the right place. The good Lord was with me and just took me there. When we did the actual production, the ladies were so nice, and all the Catawbias who were in it were most pleasant. I didn't really start off right in doing the costume and makeup because everybody had to wear makeup, and the Indians felt that that was just too much, you know, to ask an Indian to look like an Indian until I said, "Well, the White people wear makeup, too, you know." Then we began to laugh about it. The showers where everybody washed all their body wash off were in the gym, and Mrs. Ferrell had her two children with her. We lived just half a block from Burns Auditorium at the time, so they would come take their showers and baths in our house the week of the performance.

E: Now, that was Alberta Ferrell with her children. We have a tape with Alberta Ferrell. And it is Alberta's little daughter who made this first little piece of pottery that I have in my hand today. She and her children told me of going across the stage under your direction. She had a basket of chips on her head, and the little children were crying. They were crying because they didn't want to wear that makeup that you had put on them.

ML: Nobody wanted to! But the stage lighting was such that if any Catawba or White person had gone without makeup, the skin would have been washed out so completely that you can't see the features. People who are unaccustomed to

drama find this hard to understand, but that's just standard procedure.

E: Tell me about your costumes because you designed those, too, did you not?

ML: I will. At the time that William did his play, we were working with *The Lost Colony*, a Paul Green play which is performed as an outdoor play on Roanoke Island. Because of time—we'd been there a long time—we knew everybody in the outdoor theater business. So we asked some friends of ours who were in management and directing the other Paul Green play—*The Common Glory*, in Williamsburg, Virginia. So both of these outdoor dramas loaned us their costumes free. We could never have afforded it because some of the lovely colonial dresses that the ladies wore and men's suits and all that—to make them, it would have cost at that time about a hundred dollars in fabric, plus these beautiful real-hair wigs. So the Catawba Indians were dressed in the costumes of *The Lost Colony*, which had nothing to do with the Catawba Nations, but they were a costume and they were free. The only thing that we had to do to say thank you was to have everything cleaned and return it in good condition. So considering the fact that we borrowed about twenty Indian wigs and dresses for the women from *The Lost Colony*, and all of the gorgeous stuff from the House of Burgess period at Williamsburg, plus all of the Indian things that they had used in Williamsburg in a play that had not been too successful called *The Founders*. *The Founders* was the story of John Smith and Pocahontas. They had beautiful, real furs in Pocahontas' outfit and things they had spent thousands of dollars on. Wrong period, but they were furs. So I did my research and used the costumes from these outdoor dramas, guarding them just as carefully as I could,

and we made very few things. But we did make as authentic witch doctor headdress and outfit as possible from the research material. Mr. Settlemyer did the headdress, and we still have it. So it was not a matter of designing the costumes as much as it was making three or four trips with our car loaded with costumes. Back and forth. You see, we had to go get them and then we had to return them, and we had to take care of them. I was worried to death the entire time they were in our charge because we had about twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of costumes. And at that time twenty-five thousand would be well over a hundred thousand today. If friends had not been kind enough to help us financially, the organization for which we did this would not have been able to afford it.

E: Ms. Long, for the benefit of the people who hear this tape, please tell us what part you acted—of course I know—what part you acted in that pageant, and what did your husband do?

ML: Well, it's the granddaddy of all outdoor dramas. William and I both started working for it in 1940. No, he started in 1939, and I started in 1940 on costumes. After the play was resumed after the war, I tried out for a minor role of Marjorie Harvey. I did that for five years, and understudied Queen Elizabeth. And then the lady retired, whom I understudied. I tried out again and I played Queen Elizabeth the First for ten years. Then Broadway was brought in, and the school teachers were all dismissed and the Broadway staff came. At that time, the big change was made. William had ceased to be the technical director and was the director of *The Lost Colony*. We still go back, we have a home on the island. Our children

work for *The Colony* in various capacities, and my son met his future wife there. So we feel very closely allied.

E: I remember hearing you tell of your costume, the headdress that you wore for Queen Elizabeth.

ML: My costume all those ten years was the same dress. The outfit was so poor at the time—the producing organization—and we had to take care of everything and do the best we could. So I wore the same costume. It weighed twenty-seven pounds from top to bottom. I love costuming. That's why that was my chore for *Kah-Woh Catawba*.

E: It's most interesting to know that these two pageants were connected in this way.

ML: Well, all three of them, too.

E: All three?

ML: Paul Green plays. Well, three actually: *The Founders*, *The Common Glory*, and *The Lost Colony* helped out the *Kah-Woh Catawba*. That would not be possible today because the costuming of *The Colony* is under a professional setup, and *The Common Glory*, sadly enough, has closed due to economic reasons. So we did it at the right time with the right friends.

E: Now, tell me about the Indians you had in it. Do you remember about how many you had or any particular contacts with Indians that you had?

ML: To me, Indians were just like anybody else, and I never had in my mind made a distinction unless it was brought home to me. Various people who knew the members of the Nation at the time invited them to come and try out, and everyone who cared to participate was in it. I distinctly remember Gilbert Blue.

He was a teenager, you know, tall and skinny. I had the fur pieces to go around the waist. I remember saying, "Now gentlemen, if you all have a pair of old khaki pants, I can sew a fringe down the side, and you wear the fur over it." Gilbert said, "But they didn't do that!" I said, "I know it, but I can't ask men to go around with very little clothes on. They would be embarrassed." He said, "No, no we've got to." So Gilbert got the trousers off and then wore the breach cloth with furs. Then I had feathers and all of this, and I said, "It seems to me from what I've read they should go"—and I showed him. He said, "Mrs. Long, I don't mean to argue with you, but I feel that they ought to be done like this," and he just stuck the feathers in his hair, and it was perfect. And I said, "How did you know how to do this? Have you studied this, Gilbert?" He said, "I just know." So evidently there was a racial memory because I'm sure that for a hundred years—or two hundred—nobody had dressed like that. But he just seemed to have the right feeling, and he helped in that fashion.

E: Gilbert Blue is the present Chieftain of the Indians.

ML: Yes, he is, and I'm very proud of him, and I read every word I can about their contemporary problems with the government.

E: Was there any pay involved in these people acting?

ML: No, no one was paid except William and Chris Reynolds because this was strictly a community affair.

WL: We got about a week's pay each.

ML: We all contributed our time and our interest because everybody wanted to do it together.

E: How long did it take you to prepare the production?

ML: Well see, before William started writing, I spent seven months researching. William wrote for two months and over-wrote. This is the way you do when you prepare something. Then his script, he had to have it typed and retyped, and then his script was sent to Rock Hill for Dr. Reynolds to go through and find the people for it and begin the rehearsal. Because it was well in rehearsal before we got back from our summer tour.

E: Then how long did it take you after you started rehearsing? How many—

ML: Well, every play takes about four to five weeks. You can't possibly rehearse in less than that, and if you rehearse more than that, people are tired.

E: Did you have the cooperation of the people of Rock Hill?

ML: It seemed to me everybody was there.

WL: Yes.

ML: We have the list of the characters, and if you remember we played three nights in Burns Auditorium at Winthrop College.

WL: Four.

ML: Four nights to a total audience of close to ten thousand people. Now, that is cooperation.

E: That really is.

ML: Of course, we never filled Burns because it's too large an auditorium. But to have an attendance of almost ten thousand people is an achievement. One thing that touched me very much: You always leave the show to be run by stage managers, and then you sit out front and watch it and try to make it better for the

next performance. So on opening night, we who had worked with it were on the back rows, and there was a quick ceremony before we opened the curtain.

Possibly you remember because I'm sure you were there, and the gentleman—I can't remember, was it Mr. Gault? Probably.

WL: Yes.

ML: Reserved seats for the members of the Catawba Nation so they could sit together as our honored guests. When he asked them to rise, they did. I'd spent—this is twelve months, almost a year that I'd spent living with the ancient Catawbans in my mind. Then when the group of people stood up, I cried. I just could not help it. I stood there and applauded and just cried. I turned to Miriam Williford, who was about five seats away, and I said, "I'm sorry, but I find this very touching." She turned her face to me and she, too, was crying just as hard as she could. Because we felt that quite possibly the history of our state would have been so different had it not been for the ancestors of those people who were standing there.

E: That's most interesting!

ML: It was to me because as I say at that time I did not know a single member of the Catawba Nation. But after that I started teaching at Rock Hill High School in the fall of 1964. Every time I found a Catawba, I'd tell him that I'm one of them, you know, and I'd try to work in their history and the accomplishments of their ancestors as much as I can.

E: Tell me some of the ones that you know at Rock Hill High that are Indians.

ML: Oh, I had the Cantys and the Harrisses and the Sanders. I have Randy Blue

right now.

WL: Who's the one that went with Nancy?

ML: Oh, Harry Blue.

WL: Harry was delightful.

ML: David Williams's great-niece when she was a student at Winthrop.

WL: This is an interesting part that might fit in. When my niece, Nancy, went to school at Winthrop, she hadn't been by to see us. Harry was dating her, and he worked in the A & P Store. And I said, "Well, she hadn't been by to see us yet." So Harry said, "Well, I won't put up with that." So the next time he had a date with her, he brought my own niece by to see me.

E: That was romantic.

ML: Harry had a sense of family. And he felt that this should be done. There is one thing that I have done in my life that I'm very proud of. The first year of integration in all public schools was very difficult. But at Rock Hill High, we did not have anybody hurt. Oh, groups would yell at each other a lot and stamp their feet, but we finally calmed ourselves down. And here, six years later, why, kids are kids are kids, you know?. But the first year, it was rough. And at that time we ended the school year with a "class day," whereby the students wrote little funny things and we had them learn the prophecy. And everybody had a grand time. We'd done it so much by 1971 that it was a two-hour program, and it was like a real play. So because we had every teenager in Rock Hill in our school—there were twenty-four hundred, I think—we had to have "class day" in the gym. So we built a little stage in the middle and had microphones, and the whole thing just

worked beautifully and everybody had a grand time. Dressed up somebody as Geraldine—you know, Flip Wilson's character—and they came in on a motorcycle, and we just had fun. I wanted a nice ending because everything has to end well. I got to thinking—this was before all this "multi-ethnic heritage" in York County was started—I got to thinking, "Why not?" So I asked Eric Canty, who was a senior, if he would walk up the steps and stand on the platform and welcome the Black and the White presidents of the student council. And Eric is shy. Most of our Catawbas are. They're very modest people. He had to think about it. It took a lot of courage, but he did it. So we brought out the American flag, the state flag, and the school flag and held them at the corners of the platform. Between the American flag and the state flag, here came Eric as the Catawba, and his hands went out, and at the same time the Black and White students touched his hands. I cried over that! I was so moved. Because after all, the Indians were here first, and the rest of us are their guests.

E: Now, can you tell me who Eric's family was?

ML: Well, you know Eric Canty. They all look alike. Little Ellen, his sister.

E: I'll find out what family he comes from.

ML: Wally, his older brother, is working the school district now. I'm very fond of all the children.

E: Tell me how you got the name for your pageant.

ML: Well, I'm sure you're very aware of the books by Dr. Speck. One was written in 1916 when he spent a great deal of time with each of the Tribes of American Indians throughout our continent. He took down stories and tales and recipes in

the international phonetic alphabet. For each group, there is a very slender book of folklore with the story in English and then the story in the phonetic alphabet. So we needed a good title. And after a year of my life spent with their history, I felt we ought to say thank you. So, "Catawba" itself means "people of the river," and I hunted through Dr. Speck—I read the international phonetic alphabet because I'm a speech teacher as well as a drama teacher. And so, I found the word "thank you" in the English and then looked it up in the phonics, and it came out "Kah-Woh." So, we have the Catawba words as the title of the play.

E: Was any of the language used in the play? The songs?

ML: No.

E: The song that Ms. Ferrell sang as she crossed the stage?

ML: That was the only authentic one we had. Because by this time, none of the dances had been remembered or anything. What we did was a dramatic production and not an absolutely authentic, historical one. That was due to, frankly, lack of money. You do what you can with what you have.

E: But it was an amazing thing. I saw it of course, and I will never forget it. But now, how much of it do you think was really true?

ML: All of it.

E: All of it was true?

ML: Of the dialogue, of course.

E: But now George Washington never came here, did he?

WL: Yes.

ML: George Washington? Yes, ma'am.

E: I mean to see the Indian?

ML: He came to the Crawford Home near the site of the present Andrew Jackson State Park, and he spent the night there.

E: Yes.

ML: They called Sally and Charles Newriver to come from their home over to the Crawford homestead. That is where George Washington presented the gorget. I did this again during our American bicentennial. The students and I were asked to do a story of York County in the American Revolution, and the technique is the same that Paul Green or Kirby Hunter used. You get your history exactly right. You get your names of your people, but you have to bring them to life. So the only non-authentic thing is the actual dialogue, but you do tend to write it in the type of language that people used in various periods of history. The one that you're researching? You read a lot of the contemporary writings, and then your pen or your typewriter scoots along. So *Kah-Woh Catawba* is absolutely as authentic as we could make it.

E: That's amazing.

ML: We're school teachers. It's our responsibility.

E: What to you was the most interesting or the most touching scene in the old play?

ML: The smallpox scene in which the infected blankets had been given to the Catawbas and so many of the people died. William wrote a very tender scene where the baby dies. Oh, I just thought that was just tremendous. It was a horrible situation, but it was a tremendous scene.

WL: Where did we get that speech?

ML: Which one? At the end?

WL: Yes.

E: Now, will you read it?

ML: “They say that on a quiet peaceful evening when the mists are rising from the river and the breeze is whistling through the pines, you can stand on the bank of the Catawba River, and from across the river you can hear the beating of the tom-tom and the shuffling of the dancing feet. In many ways the ancient ones are still with us.”

E: That's beautiful, very beautiful.

ML: That was the final speech of the play.

E: Tell me what you heard about Doris Blue's education.

ML: Well, this past June I was one of fifteen adults in a workshop at Winthrop College. It was a government project where we all received graduate credit for it, on the multi-ethnic cultural heritage of York County. Mrs. Doris Blue was a member of this group. So she and Mrs. Frances Wade informed us very carefully about the history and the life on the reservation. Mrs. Blue said that her parents wanted their two daughters to be educated. So the father moved from the reservation to the old Winthrop farm where he assisted and hoped to get his children into Winthrop Training School. Now here he was, an employee at Winthrop College. So the powers that be at this particular time said they were sorry, they couldn't let his children come to the school because he wasn't an American citizen. So Mr. Blue took out citizenship papers—not Mr. Blue but Doris' father—

E: Mr. Wheelock.

ML: Wheelock. And took out the citizenship papers. After he was accepted, he went back to Winthrop Training School, and they made up some other excuse and would not let those little girls go to school. So some of the teachers in the town were incensed, and they would take months about. And the teacher would go every afternoon and tutor the little girls. And finally, Doris wanted something above the level on which the tutor could take her. So she went to Cherokee, to the Indian school at Cherokee for her last year. At that time, that's as far as any Indian student could go.

E: That's amazing. Now, let me add a little bit to your story. When Doris Blue's father was not able to get her into the public schools, he took her out to the reservation for the first early grades to go to that little one-teacher school there. She would spend the week with an aunt, and then on the weekends she would ride in a horse and buggy with the teacher—who happened to be Miss Macey Stevenson, a retired teacher from Mexico—to the little village of Lesslie. Miss Macey Stevenson would see that little girl was placed on the train for Rock Hill.

ML: Is that right?

E: That's right. Her father was also an educated man. Father and mother were both well educated. Her father was also the Medicine Man in the picture I showed you a few minutes ago.

ML: Isn't that interesting? To see this very dignified lady—and Doris is very handsome—look at you in 1977 and say, "I wanted an education, but I was denied it." Oh, it makes you feel terrible!

E: Do you know the other end of this story? Her daughter Mildred was finally allowed to come into Rock Hill High School. At first they were not allowed to even come to the high school, but she was allowed to come to Rock Hill High School. And Mildred, Doris' daughter, was the first graduate of the Rock Hill High School.

ML: Is that right?

E: That's right. So that's the end of our—

ML: Well, that's a good ending. I would like to hear that her children have received their PhDs.

E: I'd like so, too.

ML: Very much so.

[End of interview]

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